

208 The Story of My **Life**

I wonder if in all the many hundreds of books written on Shakespeare and his plays this point has been taken up ? I once wrote a paper on the " Letters in Shakespeare's Plays," and congratulated myself that they had never been made a separate study. The very day after I first read my paper before the British Empire Shakespeare League, a lady wrote to me from Oxford and said I was mistaken in thinking that there was no other contribution to the subject. She enclosed an essay of her own which had either been published or read before some society. Probably some one else has dealt with Shakespeare's patronage of fathers and neglect of mothers ! I often wonder what the mothers of Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia were like. I think Lear must have married twice.

This was the first of Henry living's great Shakespearean productions. *' Hamlet " and " Othello " had been mounted with care, but, in spite of statements that I have seen to the contrary, they were not true reflections of Irving as a producer. In beauty I do not think that " Romeo and Juliet" surpassed " The Cup," but it was very sumptuous, impressive and Italian. It was the most *elaborate* of all the Lyceum productions. In it Henry first displayed his mastery of crowds. The brawling of the rival houses in the streets, the procession of girls to wake Juliet on her wedding morning, the musicians, the magnificent reconciliation of the two houses which closed the play, every one on the stage holding a torch, were all treated with a marvellous sense of pictorial effect.

Henry once said to me : " ' Hamlet * could
be played
anywhere on its acting merits. It marches
from situation
to situation. But ' Romeo and Juliet *
proceeds from
picture to picture. Every line suggests a
picture. It is
a dramatic poem rather than a drama, and I
mean to treat
it from that point of view,"